United Nations A/C.2/57/SR.25

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
26 January 2004
English
Original: Spanish

Second Committee

Summary record of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 November 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Suazo	(Honduras)
later:	Mr. Benmellouk (Vice-Chairman)	(Morocco)
later:	Mr. van der Pluijm (Vice-Chairman)	(Belgium)
later:	Mr. Suazo (Chairman)	(Honduras)

Contents

Agenda item 96: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-67431 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 96: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/57/496)

1. **Mr. Chowdhury** (High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) introduced the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/277 on the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/57/496). The report outlined the steps taken to operationalize the Office of the High Representative, the mainstreaming of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries by the organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations and bodies within their programmes of work as well as within intergovernmental processes, the coordination and cooperation between the Office and the organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, and support provided to and cooperation with the Office of the High Representative by Member States.

2. The global scenario that had emerged since the adoption of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action more than one year previously called for special attention to the least developed countries. Despite the special measures incorporated in the programmes of action adopted in the 1980s and 1990s, development in those countries in the real sense remained elusive. Most of their populations were still living in extreme poverty and, despite the major variations in their economic indicators, many of those countries showed weak performance in achieving the Millennium Declaration goals. In 1999-2000, aggregate net resource flows had been lower than in 1994-1998. In particular, official development assistance had fallen from 0.09 per cent of donors' GNP in 1991 to 0.05 per cent in 2001. Substantially larger amounts of official assistance to least developed countries would be urgently needed, if they were to achieve the goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2015 and achieve sustainable development and sustained economic growth.

3. Since he had assumed his functions in April 2002, and despite very limited staffing, the Office had taken a number of steps for its operationalization, among which mention should be made of the preparation and approval of the medium-term plan for 2002-2005, the establishment of working relations with offices and departments within and outside the United Nations system, the submission of reports to the Economic and Social Council beginning in 2003 on the annual reviews of the Brussels Programme of Action, the consultations with Member States, and the preparations for the Cotonou Ministerial Conference and the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation. The Office was expected to play an advocacy role by publicizing the problems of the three groups of countries. It would mobilize international support around issues such as poverty eradication, capacity-building, acceleration of economic growth and sustainable development and promotion of the progressive global integration of the three groups. It would also contribute to the implementation of the relevant development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration.

4. The initial priority of the Office had been to establish contacts and working arrangements with all stakeholders for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, with special attention to entities of the United Nations system. Since the preparation of the report, he had addressed the 49th session of the Trade and Development Board and the 123rd session of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), held substantive discussions with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and with the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), made a special presentation in the plenary of the 35th session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and met with senior officials of the World Bank and with the Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Office had also established contacts with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations located in New York and Geneva and planned to institutionalize those contacts and future collaboration. Cooperation with the private sector had also begun. At the High-Level Round Table on Growing Sustainable Business in the Least Developed Countries, convened during the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, practical discussions had been held between the heads of some 50 major companies, donors and least developed countries.

5. His Office had been working closely with Member States and secretariats of agencies of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations on their mainstreaming of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. In that connection, the FAO Council and the Ministerial Conference of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had decided to give special attention to the implementation of the Programme of Action as part of their respective programmes of work. Also, a number of organizations in the United Nations system had already established focal points for the least developed countries. Those countries themselves had begun to mobilize to implement the Programme of Action. The Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, organized in Cotonou in August 2002 by the Government of Benin, allowed the least developed countries themselves to reiterate their political commitment to implement the Programme of Action effectively.

6. For their part, the international development partners had continued to address the concerns of the least developed countries, which had received particular attention at the Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in Doha in November 2001 and at the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey in March 2002. The Group of Eight Summit held in Kananaskis in June 2002 had taken into account the problems of the least developed countries and, in particular, agreed on the goal of duty-free and quota-free market access for all products originating in those countries, the addition of $1 billion to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Trust Fund, and an increased use of grants rather than loans for the poorest debt-vulnerable countries. Also, the World Summit on Sustainable Development had taken account of the concerns of the least developed countries.

7. In conclusion, the report underscored that, while the primary responsibility would continue to be that of the least developed and landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States when it came to achieving the objectives set, they could not be met without the collaboration and support of their development partners. The report went on to reiterate the Secretary-General's commitment to coordinating the support provided by the United Nations system as a whole to the development efforts of those three most vulnerable groups.

8. He announced that that very morning the Office's web site had officially been launched, comprising one main home site and three sub-sites for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Updated information on progress in implementing programmes for those States was posted. The Office was also planning to launch an Open Forum for Partnership at Headquarters, whose purpose was to brief Member States and other stakeholders periodically on the status of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action by United Nations bodies.

9. It was important to draw lessons from the experience of running the first two programmes for the least developed countries when implementing the current Programme of Action, especially regarding the need for a strong commitment on the part of the countries themselves together with support from the international community. There must also be a clearly defined operational plan specifying the activities and roles of stakeholders, and effective arrangements for coordination, monitoring and review of the progress in implementation.

10. The unbearable debt burden of the least developed countries deserved the special attention of the international community. That burden had been made even more untenable as the HIV/AIDS situation became critical in a number of them and had begun to have a serious impact on their development efforts. There was a striking correlation between the heavily indebted poor countries and those with a high rate of HIV/AIDS. The "Barcelona report" recently published by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) had also indicated that reducing the debt burden would boost the HIV/AIDS response in countries that needed it the most, because annual debt servicing often undermined the social spending needed to combat the pandemic. He made a strong appeal to the international community to take urgent steps to cancel all the debt of the least developed and heavily indebted poor countries.

11. Lastly, his Office was determined to forge the much needed global partnership for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. The next few months were critical in establishing, especially in the least developed countries, forums and high-level focal points at the country level. The development partners must also take further steps to translate into action the commitments they made in Brussels. As the Secretary-

General had stated in his opening address to the current session of the General Assembly, only by multilateral action could the people in the least developed countries be given the chance to escape the misery of poverty, ignorance and disease.

12. *Mr. Benmellouk (Morocco), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

13. **Mr. Carpio Govea** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the need for effective coordination, monitoring and follow-up in implementing the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, and urged that the necessary funds should be provided for the operation of the Office of the High Representative. The support of the international community and, especially, adequate financial resources and technical assistance would guarantee the success of the follow-up, which should focus on an assessment of the economic and social progress made in implementing commitments by the least developed countries themselves and, of course, by the donor countries.

14. The Group of 77 and China believed that some mechanism to channel the funds for the implementation of the Programme of Action would be extremely useful because it would greatly facilitate the task of coordinating initiatives at the national, subregional, regional and international levels. They especially favoured the establishment of a trust fund for the least developed countries, and appealed to Member States, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector to make voluntary contributions to such a fund once it was set up.

15. The Group of 77 and China reiterated their call to the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, especially UNCTAD, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and to the international financial institutions to take the various elements of the Programme of Action into account in their activities. Lastly, recognition should be given to the work done by UNCTAD within its mandate to implement the Programme of Action, and it should be urged to do further work in that area.

16. **Mr. Moesby** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated Central and Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the associated countries, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country of the European Economic Area, Iceland, reaffirmed the great importance that the European Union attached to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, which was based on partnership and mutual and shared responsibility. The European Union was committed to contributing to that partnership, and had already taken a unilateral initiative to open its markets to products from those countries and made a commitment to untie its assistance. However, the implementation of the Programme of Action depended first and foremost on its integration in national poverty reduction strategies.

17. The organizations of the United Nations system had an essential role to play in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. It was crucial to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system in order to facilitate coordinated implementation of the Programme of Action, and its follow up and monitoring, on the basis of the newly established Office of the High Representative. The Office had been mandated to oversee, coordinate, review and evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action and to establish a monitoring mechanism which did not duplicate but complemented existing mechanisms to monitor and report on progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, the Office must further strengthen and elaborate systematic links with the various United Nations organizations, including UNCTAD, and it was imperative that the Office should be able to make full use of the United Nations resident coordinator system. The Programme of Action must be implemented and show its impact at the local level and, consequently, it was in that area that feedback on the progress made should be obtained.

18. Within the framework of its mandate, the Office of the High Representative would oversee the mainstreaming of the Brussels Programme of Action within the work of the United Nations system. The European Union welcomed the decisions by several United Nations organizations, including UNICEF,

UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNCTAD, to mainstream the Programme of Action in their activities and encouraged other United Nations organizations and the Bretton Woods institutions to do the same.

19. In conclusion, he said that the implementation of the Programme of Action was part of the broader context of several major conferences and summit meetings with the Millennium Declaration as the overarching framework. The international community's common effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals would be successful only if substantial progress was made in reducing extreme poverty in the least developed countries.

20. **Mr. Al-Haddad** (Yemen) said that it was increasingly clear that, although more than three decades had passed since work had begun at the international level to help the least developed countries, and despite the efforts of the countries themselves, the economic and social difficulties facing most of them remained, and they were still marginalized from the international economic system. That situation resulted from a combination of internal and external factors. The efforts made by the international community to solve those problems were undeniable, but the results continued to fall short of expectations. Lessons must be drawn from the most significant shortcomings, both in national initiatives and in the support provided by donors and the mechanisms established at the level of the United Nations system. Yemen hoped that the Office of the High Representative would help overcome those difficulties.

21. Yemen reaffirmed the importance of the policies and measures approved within the framework of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for 2001-2010. The sustainable development of the least developed countries would be achieved only through their progressive integration into the world economy, by promoting trade and opening the gates of the industrialized countries to products from the least developed countries. It would also be necessary to make the necessary structural changes in the economies of the least developed countries and ensure that the measures adopted at Brussels helped resolve their numerous economic and social problems. It was particularly important to increase the participation of industry and the service sector in the gross domestic product and to diversify exports, since most of the least developed countries were still limited to exporting one or two commodities. It was also necessary to strengthen the capacity to mobilize the necessary local resources to finance development programmes, and to improve the global economic situation.

22. Yemen had adopted many measures to adapt its national development plans and programmes to the new trends, in the light of the outcome and resolutions of international forums. A programme of work had been drawn up for the country's development for 2001-2010, and various interested parties had participated in its formulation, including donors and representatives of the funds and programmes of the United Nations at the local level. The programme of work sought to achieve an increase in the gross domestic product of between 6.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent and to intensify efforts to reduce poverty from 33 per cent to 15 per cent in 2010. The programme would guide investment at all levels, especially in helping to reduce the rate of unemployment and achieve the desired level of economic development, which would benefit the well-being and standard of living of the people.

23. **Mr. Adechi** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, drew attention to the need to review the progress achieved since the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. With regard to the institutional, administrative and organizational arrangements which would serve to support the Brussels Programme of Action, he welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative and expressed the hope that it would help ensure the effective and coordinated implementation of the Programme of Action. He also commended the institutions of the United Nations system which had decided to mainstream the implementation of the Programme of Action in their programmes of work and called upon those which had not yet done so to do so as soon as possible in order to achieve the objectives envisaged during the agreed time frames. In that respect, mention should be made of the establishment, by the least developed countries themselves, of a coordinating bureau, of which Benin would hold the chairmanship for a period of five years from January 2002. The objective was to harmonize the views, actions and initiatives of the least developed countries in order to coordinate the Programme of Action and monitor its implementation at the national level, as well as the support provided by friendly and

associated countries, institutions of the United Nations system and other multilateral institutions and interested countries. His Government called for the support of all for that work.

24. Two years had already elapsed since the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action, but no concrete progress had been made. That was demonstrated by the absence of any reference in the report of the Secretary-General. He stressed the concern of the least developed countries about the possibility that the Programme of Action would suffer the same fate as the two previous programmes, despite the good intentions expressed about it, which he once again welcomed, but which were, for the time being, no more than pious hopes. Benin hoped that, after the adoption of the arrangements mentioned and the mainstreaming of the Programme of Action in the programmes of work of the institutions of the United Nations system, it would be possible to proceed to the stage of implementation of the Programme. Those arrangements must be finalized as soon as possible in order to avoid delays. If the Office of the High Representative was not provided promptly with sufficient, efficient staff, the Office would not be able to carry out its mandate within the time frames envisaged, particularly in relation to the coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

25. The least developed countries attached great importance to the implementation of the new Programme of Action, which had been the central topic of the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries held in Cotonou. At the end of the Conference, which had culminated in the Cotonou Declaration, the least developed countries had welcomed the decision by the Economic and Social Council to review the implementation of the Programme of Action annually on the basis of annual reports that would include, as far as possible, matrices of the quantitative results achieved. They had also urged the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund to support the coordination measures which, in turn, would serve to support, channel and facilitate the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. He called upon development partners to support the establishment of that fund and contribute generously to it.

26. **Mr. Chave** (Switzerland) said that the Programme of Action adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries included commitments in the areas of population, governance, building human and institutional capacities and productive capacities, trade, environment and mobilization of financial resources, and those areas largely coincided with the priorities which Switzerland applied in the context of its active cooperation with the least developed countries.

27. It was clear that good governance at the national and international levels was a prerequisite for achieving any development objective. It was also essential to maintain the coherence of monetary, financial, trade and environmental policies. The Programme of Action could be applied only by forging a broad multilateral institutional alliance at the national, regional and global levels, in which bilateral and multilateral institutions and the public and private sectors would participate. Much still remained to be done to achieve that objective.

28. At the International Conference on Financing for Development, very promising approaches had been proposed for establishing a constructive dialogue among stakeholders in the public and private sectors and civil society. At the global level, the implementation of the Third Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries should be integrated in that context, and in that of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, in order to gain even greater relevance. The regional level offered interesting possibilities for integration and economies of scale and, ultimately, for more effective official development assistance. The New Partnership for Africa's Development could play an important role which should be studied. At the national level, the establishment of national committees in the least developed countries remained essential and, in the medium term, should allow the public and private sectors and civil society of the countries concerned to take ownership of national programmes of action.

29. In view of those considerations, the Office of the High Representative could play an important role by giving greater visibility to the implementation of the Programme of Action and ensuring that it was carried out in a coherent and integrated framework. It must be ensured that technical cooperation activities were clearly linked with the priorities of the Programme of Action, which were largely reproduced in the global frameworks of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit for Sustainable Development.

30. With regard to cooperation with the least developed countries, one of the priorities should be to enable them to overcome gradually the limitations which restricted the access of their products to the industrialized countries, since the income-generating potential of that sphere was considerable. In that respect, tariff preferences did not seem to have achieved the desired results. Switzerland believed that economic integration at the regional and subregional levels offered interesting possibilities, both in intensifying trade and in attracting private investment. The economies of most of the least developed countries depended on commodities, the prices of which were subject to catastrophic variations which, in some cases, had reached levels which were unprecedented over the past 20 years. In that regard, the industrialized countries should sharply reduce or eliminate the subsidies provided for commodities which were also grown in the developing countries.

31. Lastly, Switzerland believed that the implementation of the Programme of Action would be inconceivable without making a determined effort to prevent and resolve the conflicts which were currently undermining the development initiatives of too many of the least developed countries.

32. **Mr. Shehab** (Egypt) said that the least developed countries were the poorest and weakest segment of the international community and deserved the support of the international community in their efforts to achieve economic and social development, to overcome their vulnerabilities; urgent measures were needed to implement the Brussels Programme of Action. The least developed countries had shouldered their share of responsibility. They had recently organized a ministerial conference in Cotonou, the outcome of which Egypt strongly supported. He invited the international community to urgently translate its repeated expressions of solidarity with the least developed countries into actions.

33. Egypt had, to the extent possible, strengthened its support to the least developed countries, particularly in Africa, through a large number of bilateral and triangular cooperation projects, especially in collaboration with Japan. The Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa had been at the forefront of the efforts towards strengthening South-South cooperation in the area of technical assistance and capacity-building, provision of humanitarian assistance, training, and increasing the availability of managerial, technical, administrative and research capabilities required by African countries in their economic, social and institutional development processes.

34. The delegation of Egypt welcomed the 2002 report on the least developed countries prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and believed that the United Nations and the entire international community should carefully examine its findings and recommendations. It was futile to merely restate the importance of the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of persons living in abject poverty by 2015, unless the international community shouldered its responsibilities in helping to achieve that goal. Urgent efforts were therefore required to ensure the mobilization of the necessary level of official development assistance (ODA), debt relief and access to international markets, as least developed countries would never have sufficient resources to do so on their own. Those countries should be assisted in overcoming the poverty trap, building supply capacity and generating income.

35. Egypt welcomed the steps taken by the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and was confident that his Office would effectively oversee the implementation, coordination, review and monitoring of the Brussels Programme of Action. Egypt had also taken note of initiatives undertaken by the High Representative in collaboration with the United Nations system and welcomed his support to the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council in assessing progress and in reviewing the implementation of relevant programmes of action. The Egyptian Government was sure that the Office of the High Representative would continue to cooperate with the entire United Nations system, in order to secure system-wide coordination, and with the United Nations Development Group to ensure that the resident coordinator system fully supported the least developed countries in their efforts to incorporate the goals of the Brussels Programme of Action into their national development framework. He called on the United Nations and all countries which were in a position to do so to contribute to the strengthening of the Office of the High Representative.

36. *Mr. van der Pluijm (Belgium) took the Chair.*

37. **Mr. Mizukami** (Japan) said that the Programme of Action adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was based on the achievements of the last two decades and on the determination to address the challenges facing the least developed countries in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the awareness that most of those countries were in Africa, and convinced that stability and prosperity in the world could be achieved only by addressing the problems of the African continent, Japan would host the third Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 2004.

38. With respect to ODA, Japan believed that, if maximum effect were derived from the limited resources available and the principles of partnership and national responsibility were duly applied, the international community could move towards the realization of the Brussels Programme of Action. In that regard, he pointed out that Japan provided one fifth of total ODA. With respect to the international trading system, Japan believed it was vital to give consideration to the concerns of the least developed countries in the course of securing and expanding multilateral trading rules and therefore had decided to revise its customs legislation to expand coverage under duty-free and quota-free treatment for products from the least developed countries. Debt relief for poor countries was another crucial issue. Japan had therefore decided two years earlier on a 100-per-cent reduction on eligible non-ODA claims, as well as ODA claims, and on a 200 million contribution to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Trust Fund.

39. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that the basic principles of the Programme of Action adopted in Brussels were national responsibility and partnership between the least developed countries and the international donor community. In that respect, his delegation welcomed the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the peer review mechanism, and pointed out that the least developed countries must assume the main responsibility for their development. Nevertheless, he stressed that the international donor community must assist them in implementing the Programme of Action and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Government of Norway had followed up on its commitments in that regard, by abolishing levies and customs duties on products from the least developed countries, increasing official development assistance, enhancing support for debt alleviation and increasing the resource base for promoting investment in the least developed countries. He underscored the importance of private sector involvement in a broad international partnership for economic growth and development in the least developed countries. Donor countries must promote private investment in the least developed countries, which in turn must foster a domestic environment that was conducive to the mobilization of national and international resources.

40. The coordination and effective use of scarce resources were key parameters for achieving the goals set out in the Brussels Programme of Action, and all policies and measures undertaken by the donors and the least developed countries must therefore be linked to the development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers of the countries concerned. The Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States could be instrumental in that respect, making full use of the United Nations resident coordinator system. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Economic and Social Council would also play an important role in the implementation of the Programme of Action and it was necessary to ensure the full cooperation of those bodies with the Office of the High Representative and a clear division of labour among them.

41. **Mr. Cheah** (Malaysia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and that the debate on development issues was particularly critical at a stage when the development prospects of the least developed countries remained uncertain. Even though the poor countries themselves must take the lead in establishing the enabling environment to strengthen growth, the international community should also make a contribution, through official development assistance, debt relief and improved market access for the products of the least developed countries, among other measures. The latter goal should be achieved not only by providing duty-free and quota-free access, but also by making trade preferences commercially meaningful, which included giving special attention to the security of preferences, product coverage, rules of origin and supply capacity. On the issue of external debt, it was urgent to increase debt-relief measures in order to

rescue the least developed countries from the cycle of poverty in which they were stagnating. In that context, the Group of Eight should be congratulated on the agreements reached at their meeting in Kananaskis on duty-free and quota-free access for the products of the least developed countries, the increase of one billion dollars in the Heavily Indebted Poorest Countries (HIPC) Trust Fund, and the increased use of grants rather than loans for the poorest debt-vulnerable countries. It was urgent to ensure the solvency of the Trust Fund and to continue paying attention to the debt relief of the least developed countries.

42. The Malaysian delegation welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the subsequent progress, including the adoption of the framework of action. It hoped that the Office would be allocated adequate resources to enable it to carry out its mandate adequately. It also encouraged the governing bodies of the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to mainstream the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action into their programme of work. In that regard, the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was commendable. Both the least developed countries and the international community in general should adopt coordinated actions at the national, subregional, regional and global level to ensure the long-term implementation of the Programme of Action.

43. **Mr. Menan** (Togo) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries, and recalled that the Programme of Action adopted in Brussels reaffirmed the commitment made in the Millennium Declaration with regard to the least developed countries. Bearing in mind the importance of implementing that programme adequately, the measures so far adopted by the Secretary-General in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 56/227 should be welcomed; they included, in particular, the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The High Representative had established an excellent working relationship with the agencies of the United Nations system and with regional and subregional organizations, and the entire international community should make voluntary contributions to ensure that his Office functioned effectively.

44. The delegation of Togo welcomed the decision of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA to include the Brussels Programme of Action in its work programme and activities; it considered that a special trust fund should be established in order appropriately to coordinate national, subregional, regional and global measures to implement the programme. All countries should also fulfil the commitments made at the major conferences on development by increasing official development assistance, adopting external debt relief measures, improving market access for the products of the least developed countries and promoting direct foreign investment in those countries' economies.

45. **Mr. Komasith** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) endorsed the statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; he encouraged the Office to continue to discharge its responsibilities. He also reiterated the invitation to all Member States, contained in General Assembly resolution 56/227, to extend all necessary support and cooperation to the Office, and requested the Secretary-General to intensify efforts aimed at mobilizing additional financial resources for its operation. Similarly, he expressed satisfaction with the decisions adopted by the governing bodies of UNDP/UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other agencies and bodies of the United Nations system to mainstream the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action into their activities. He requested other international and regional organizations and multilateral financial institutions to do the same. To ensure effective review of and follow-up to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, a comprehensive, results-oriented progress report should be prepared, which provided a clear picture of achievements and shortfalls. In that context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic supported the use of a matrix of the achievements of all stakeholders at the country, regional and international levels. In that way, the Governments of each least developed country and their development partners could assess annually the degree of implementation of the Programme of Action,

taking into account their commitments and respective responsibilities.

46. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic had organized a national forum on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and established a focal point within the Committee for Planning and Cooperation. Elements of the Programme of Action had already been incorporated into the medium-term socio-economic development plan and the National Poverty Eradication Programme. The Lao People's Democratic Republic was grateful to all the United Nations agencies, as well as to all donors and other development partners for their technical and financial assistance. His country had the ultimate goal of graduating from the status of least developed country by 2020 and it was recognized that the Government and the Lao people had the prime responsibility for attaining that objective. Nevertheless, it was hoped that the international community would continue to extend its support to enable the Lao People's Democratic Republic to achieve that goal and become integrated into the world economy.

47. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and with the statement made by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries, and said that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had given new impetus to the development activities of the international community by clearly defining the responsibilities of the various stakeholders. Mention should be made of the proposals of the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries held in August 2002 in Cotonou (Benin) on the establishment of a trust fund and the creation of a framework for follow-up to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. Burkina Faso invited the Committee to support those proposals.

48. The least developed countries must reduce poverty and confront the challenges of economic growth, competitiveness and democratic governance by eliminating obstacles to development, improving their competitiveness and implementing human resource development strategies. However, they could not do that alone. Thus the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action would require considerable support from bilateral and multilateral donors, decentralized cooperation and input from non-governmental organizations. In that regard, he emphasized the initiatives announced by some partners which supported the development of the least developed countries.

49. Burkina Faso had strengthened its partnership with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank by implementing an economic policy framework, reviewing public spending, participating in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative and implementing a strategic framework for growth and poverty reduction. Together with other partners and under the coordination of the European Union, machinery had been set up to define the terms of aid to Burkina Faso. With the assistance of the United Nations system, Burkina Faso had drafted a country assistance strategy and a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In the context of the Programme of Action for the decade 2001-2010, the Government of Burkina Faso planned to take advantage of the possibilities for complementarity between donors. In addition, it would attempt to accelerate and strengthen the operation of the mechanism established within the framework of the reform of development assistance terms. The Government also intended to decentralize information, establishing a collection, processing and analysis system for data on the living conditions of households, particularly poor households. It would also establish a system for monitoring poverty and sustainable human development, which would assist in the prioritization and execution of activities. Reports would be prepared at the mid-point and the end of the decade, in cooperation with partners and civil society bodies.

50. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries and noted the need to coordinate activities on behalf of those countries at the national, regional and international levels. The special needs of the least developed countries had been recognized at the International Conference on Financing for Development and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as in the Millennium Development Goals. That work should be dovetailed with the commitments in the Brussels Programme of Action. At the national level, the special circumstances of the least developed countries should be taken into account in applying UNDAFs and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. The role of the United Nations resident coordinators was

vital in that regard and Bangladesh supported the Secretary-General's proposals to strengthen it further.

51. He was pleased to note that UNCTAD and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States were effectively coordinating the implementation of the Brussels commitments. There was a need to strengthen the capacity of UNCTAD to follow up the implementation of the Development Agenda established at the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Doha. In that context, UNCTAD should provide increased support to the least developed countries in the coming years. The Bretton Woods institutions and WTO should also play an important role in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and should work in close collaboration with the United Nations system. In that connection, he asked the High Commissioner to report to the Committee on his talks with the Bretton Woods institutions.

52. One of the main functions of the Office of the High Representative was advocacy on behalf of the least developed countries. The various actors in national and international civil society could contribute significantly, and he asked the High Commissioner to give details on how he planned to mobilize them in a synergized endeavour to implement the Brussels Programme of Action, particularly in support of initiatives at the national level.

53. For its part, Bangladesh, which had already finalized an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper with the participation of all key stakeholders, had demonstrated on a number of occasions its commitment to eradicate abject poverty by using innovative mechanisms such as micro-credit and encouragement of non-formal education. Poverty eradication should take place against a backdrop of pluralism, democracy, human rights, women's empowerment and good governance.

54. **Mr. Blanco Dominguez** (Dominican Republic) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. A review of social and economic advances in the 1990s revealed that, despite the efforts for freedom and economic arrangements, the political and structural reforms and the creation of a favourable environment in the least developed countries, the international community had not fulfilled the commitments made in Paris at the Second Conference. Although it was undeniable that the principal responsibility for development lay with the countries themselves, concrete international support in that context was vital and governments and international organizations had only partially fulfilled the commitments made at each of the major summits held by the United Nations over the past decade.

55. He was convinced that the improvement of human well-being was a fundamental prerequisite for peace and counter-terrorism and that the least developed countries, the landlocked countries and the small island countries required urgent attention through a holistic preparation enabling them to confront the crushing vulnerability factors that they were facing. He highlighted the difference between the attitude of the Governments of Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden, which had met the goal of allocating 0.15 per cent of their gross domestic product to help the least developed countries, and that of the other donors in the Development Assistance Committee, which had decreased their aid from 0.09 per cent of GDP in 1990 to only 0.05 per cent in 1998.

56. The conferences held at Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg had laid the foundations for the creation of a world association in favour of development between the developed countries and the developing countries, but the success of those conferences would be hollow if their work programmes were not implemented completely and efficiently. His delegation was concerned about the prospect that new and unproductive structures would be created for the follow-up of each of the major conferences held recently. It therefore endorsed the proposal to establish a high-level working group, with equitable representation, that would be not only intergovernmental but would also involve all the actors responsible for development and that would identify the points in the Millennium Declaration Goals that coincided with the Brussels, Monterrey and Johannesburg action plans, without excluding the least developed countries, the landlocked States and the small island developing States, the indigenous communities and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The commitments assumed by the actors in the system would thus be visible and the

level of compliance of each of those protagonists would be evaluated from a single viewpoint. Lastly, he emphasized the need for agreements and resolutions to be reflected in real actions for development that would help to narrow the social and economic gap between countries.

57. **Mr. Penjor** (Bhutan) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Benin, on behalf of the least developed countries, and welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative. Despite its resource constraints, the Office had made significant progress. However, it was not fully equipped to carry out the tasks assigned to it, and needed qualified staff to fill the posts approved by the General Assembly; his delegation hoped that Member States would make voluntary contributions, as requested by the Secretary-General.

58. Collaboration between all stakeholders was essential in implementing the relevant programmes of the Brussels Programme of Action and, in that regard, his delegation welcomed the close working relations which the Office of the High Representative had established with other organizations of the United Nations system and various multilateral organizations, as well as the linkages it was promoting with civil society. His delegation acknowledged with appreciation the decisions taken by UNCTAD, UNDP and UNFPA, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNICEF, WIPO, UNESCO and WTO to mainstream the actions and commitments of the Programme of Action in their work. Those organizations, particularly UNCTAD, had a pivotal role to play in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and they therefore needed to be provided with the necessary resources to enhance their operational capacity.

59. At the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Cotonou from 5 to 7 August 2002 under the auspices of the Government of Benin, Member States had reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. A significant outcome of the Conference was the call in the Cotonou Declaration for the establishment of a trust fund for the least developed countries, to be managed by the Office of the High Representative, with the objective of providing support to those countries in the implementation of the Programme of Action. His delegation hoped that that initiative would receive financial support from development partners, without whose collaboration and support it would not be possible to address critical issues such as the decline in official development assistance, external debt overhang, trade in commodities and agriculture and capacity-building of the least developed countries.

60. *Mr. Suazo (Honduras) resumed the Chair.*

61. **Mr. Da Fonseca** (Cape Verde) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Benin, on behalf of the least developed countries, and Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States still had insufficient staff, and his delegation hoped that appropriate means would be made available to it expeditiously to enable it to fulfil its mandate. Cape Verde, as both a least developed country and a small island developing State, was highly motivated to cooperate with the Office to ensure the successful implementation of the Barbados and Brussels Programmes of Action.

62. The lack of a clear commitment and an insufficient response to the needs of African countries had been among the causes of the disappointing results of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, and it must be ensured that that situation was not repeated with the millennium development goals. His delegation stressed the importance of ownership of the development process. However, many of the least developed countries lacked the necessary human resources and institutional capacities to steer the process. It would therefore be desirable for the Office of the High Representative and other relevant United Nations bodies to envisage practical ways to help those Governments overcome their difficulties. The Office should also make available experiences and best practices of other least developed countries and small island developing States.

63. The Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, at Cotonou, was a very important document which showed the commitment of those Governments to implement the Brussels Programme of Action and included the useful recommendation that a matrix of

achievements in the implementation of the Programme of Action should be drawn up. Cape Verde also supported the call for the establishment of a trust fund to assist the least developed countries in that task.

64. Poverty was a pressing issue for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, with implications for the environment, sustainable development, peace and security. It was for that reason that the Millennium Declaration and the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had adopted the reduction of extreme poverty by half by 2015 as an overarching goal. In that regard, many developing countries had adopted or were preparing poverty reduction strategies with the support of the United Nations and the participation of civil society; they had also adopted structural reforms to guarantee good governance and promote democracy. Cape Verde had completed the elaboration of its interim poverty reduction strategy paper and the final text would be ready in 2003.

65. The developed world had also taken some important steps, such as the encouraging commitments made in Monterrey, Kananaskis and Johannesburg. It was to be hoped that those commitments would soon be translated into specific actions which would help developing countries reduce poverty and strengthen the reform process. In that regard, the issue of debt was of paramount importance and should be addressed as a matter of urgency, especially through debt cancellation for all the heavily indebted poor countries and least developed countries.

66. In conclusion, he drew attention to the process of revision of the classification of least developed countries that would take place in 2003. In that process it must be duly taken into account that certain countries, including Cape Verde, showed indicators that might mask the reality of a high vulnerability and heavy dependence on external and unpredictable factors. In the case of Cape Verde, those indicators needed to be set against the massive problems of lack of natural resources, unemployment, insularity, geographical disparities, drought, environmental degradation and poverty. Many of the favourable indices in per capita income, health, education and sanitation resulted from a well-managed utilization of foreign assistance, complemented by remittances from expatriates. However, there was no guarantee of the sustainability of those sources and their reduction could rapidly reverse that relatively positive situation. The loss of the benefits associated with least developed country status before a country was firmly on a path of sustainable development could result in its return to that group years later, and in a worse state. His delegation hoped that those concerns would be taken into account during the review in 2003.

67. **Ms. Izata** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), endorsed the statements made by Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Benin, on behalf of the least developed countries, and commended the efforts of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to advocate for the least developed countries. It was imperative for the Office of the High Representative to be provided with the necessary resources in a timely and predictable manner in order to facilitate the fulfilment of its functions in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

68. SADC welcomed the adoption of the Cotonou Declaration, in which the Governments of the least developed countries reaffirmed their primary responsibility for their own development and called on the international community and multilateral institutions to provide adequate resources and technical assistance to enable them to enhance their productive capacity in order to build the basis for their sustainable development. It reaffirmed the new commitment made by the African Heads of State within NEPAD, which represented a common vision of the future and a shared conviction of the need to eradicate poverty and place African countries in general and the least developed countries in particular on the path of sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The Brussels Programme of Action and NEPAD were complementary.

69. While SADC welcomed the recent positive developments in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the region continued to be faced with various problems, including food shortages, the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. The external debt burden continued to constrain the capacity of SADC to address structural problems and accelerate growth and development. The SADC region was ready to play its part in the implementation of the Brussels Programme

of Action. SADC was completing its regional indicative strategic plan which, it believed, would contribute to meeting the challenges faced by the least developed countries. It hoped that the international community would honour the commitment made in Brussels and continue to assist the region in addressing the humanitarian crisis.

70. **Mr. Casado** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) stressed that the least developed countries occupied a central place in UNIDO programmes and said that UNIDO activities in the follow-up to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries concentrated on commitments four (Building productive capacities to make globalization work for the least developed countries) and five (Enhancing the role of trade and development) of the Programme of Action. At that Conference, UNIDO had formally presented its large-scale programme designed to enable the least developed countries to participate in international trade; a trust fund had been established in order to finance that initiative.

71. The trade facilitation/market access initiative was well under way, with a budget of 8 million euros, funded by the European Union and covering the eight West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAMEU) member States, seven of which were least developed countries. UNIDO had also elaborated, in conjunction with WAMEU, a pilot programme on industrial restructuring and upgrading, for a duration of five years and with a budget of US$ 12 million. It was expected that the European Union would also contribute to the funding of that programme, which should enable hundreds of industrial enterprises of WAMEU countries to face international competition, as trade barriers were gradually dismantled. The programme also aimed to contribute to the regional integration process of the WAMEU countries and was in line with the objectives and goals of NEPAD. At a seminar held in April 2002 at the secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja (Nigeria), a joint UNIDO-ECOWAS trade facilitation/market access/industrial restructuring and upgrading programme for the seven member States not included in the joint WAMEU/European Union programme, six of which were least developed countries, had been finalized. The programme would have a duration of five years and a budget of about US$ 29 million. ECOWAS and UNIDO were actively seeking donor support. A programme was also being drawn up for the seven least developed countries which were members of SADC. Two programmes aimed to promote the development of small businesses in the agro-industrial sector. The first concerned the development of micro and small enterprises in the field of fisheries and agro-industry in rural areas of Senegal; it was being implemented with a contribution of US$ 600,000 from UNDP, and had elicited interest among donors such as Austria, France and Luxembourg. It was expected that the programme would subsequently be replicated in other least developed countries with dual economies, i.e. a small modern sector and a large informal sector that needed to be modernized. The second programme aimed to reinforce the capacities of intermediary organizations of civil society and the private sector in the agro-business sector. The initial budget for that programme was about US$ 6 million.

72. Collaboration with other organizations had also played an important role in the follow-up action to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. For example, UNIDO had participated in the WTO Committee on Trade and Development, Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, and Subcommittee for the Least Developed Countries. In addition, UNIDO and UNCTAD would jointly organize two regional workshops in Africa in the framework of the Doha Development Agenda, in order to enhance the participation of the least developed countries in global trade. UNIDO was a partner along with UNCTAD, the Foreign Investment Advisory Service (FIAS) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), in the Multi-Agency Programme on Investment Promotion, which aimed to increase the level of foreign direct investment flowing into the least developed countries.

73. The commitments of UNIDO to promote sustainable energy systems had generated a wealth of projects and follow-up activities. Specifically, renewable energy projects had been formulated to promote solar, wind and biomass energy in rural areas in six of the least developed countries. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) had already approved funding for the programme in Zambia. Another energy project was the joint UNIDO/UNDP regional multifunctional platform programme which delivered a simple diesel engine that could power different tools such as cereal mills, huskers or battery chargers, or

generate electricity for lighting and refrigeration. The multifunctional platform would soon be included in the programmes of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

74. **Mr. Ouane** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that the activities of UNCTAD in the least developed and landlocked developing countries and small island developing States combined research and policy analysis, consensus-building on basic issues and technical cooperation for capacity-building. The research and policy analysis focused mainly on macroeconomic, sectoral and thematic issues of interest to the least developed countries, with a special emphasis on trade, investment and technology. The overall UNCTAD objective in that area was to contribute to global policy debates and consensus-building on means to integrate the least developed countries beneficially into the multilateral trading system and the global economy.

75. A major element of the work of the UNCTAD secretariat in research and policy analysis on the least developed countries was its report, "*The Least Developed Countries, 2002*". The report would be discussed at the executive session of the Trade and Development Board scheduled for December 2002. Another analytical contribution of UNCTAD to the work of the United Nations related to the benefits arising from the status of least developed country and to a "smooth transition" for countries graduating from the least developed category.

76. The technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD aimed above all to alleviate the supply-and-demand constraints facing the least developed and landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, with particular emphasis on human resources development, institutional capacity-building and policy advice on a wide range of issues, especially trade, investment, technology, enterprise development and debt management.

77. UNCTAD had constantly mainstreamed its work on the least developed countries in all substantive areas and operational activities. Accordingly, and in response to General Assembly resolution 56/227, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD had reviewed the title and functions of the Office of the Special Coordinator and renamed it the Special Programme for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries. Its new functional orientation would have two main pillars, namely, the interdivisional coordination of the work of UNCTAD in favour of the three categories of countries, which were treated as cross-cutting issues; and specific research and analysis as well as the implementation of certain technical cooperation projects.

78. In view of the priority given to increased coordination among cooperation on the organs and organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD had invited the High Representative and the Vice-President of the World Bank to participate in the deliberations of the Board in October on issues of interest to the least developed and landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. UNCTAD and the Office of the High Representative were already working closely in several areas within their respective mandates.

79. The Trade and Development Board had at its forty-ninth session conducted an in-depth review of UNCTAD activities in favour of the least developed countries, including the orientation of its future work, and it had encouraged the secretariat to pursue its activities. It had emphasized that UNCTAD must contribute to the mandated reviews of the implementation of the Programme of Action by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. It had also noted with appreciation the research and advisory services provided by the secretariat on the economic vulnerability of a number of countries and recommended that it should continue that work. The Board had emphasized the importance of technical assistance in enhancing effective participation in the multilateral trading system, and the coherent approach being taken in the context of the Integrated Framework. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Board had given rise to a series of follow-up activities by the Special Programme in many important areas, including policy research and analysis and technical cooperation, with special reference to diversification in the commodities sector; the impact of market access commitments by development partners of the least developed countries, such as the "Everything But Arms" initiative, the United States African Growth and Opportunity Act and other trade preferences; the effective benefits arising from the status of least developed country; and the Integrated Framework and capacity-building. UNCTAD would present the report of the Board and the agreed conclusions to the General Assembly at its current session.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.